

[barefoot in the wildest winter, catching my death](#) by [stardustupinlights](#)

Series: marked me like a blood stain [4]

Category: 原神 | Genshin Impact (Video Game)

Genre: Diluc is Bad at Feelings (Genshin Impact), Diluc is So Done (Genshin Impact), Fluff, Hurt Diluc (Genshin Impact), Implied Mpreg, Kaeya Angst (Genshin Impact), Kaeya Has A Plan, Kaeya is Bad At Feelings (Genshin Impact), Khaenri'ah (Genshin Impact), Khaenri'ah Royalty Kaeya (Genshin Impact), M/M, Post-Canon, Sad Diluc (Genshin Impact), Spiral Abyss (Genshin Impact), Wedding Planning, Weddings, Worried Diluc (Genshin Impact), and im too lazy to add all the smut tags, but they manage in this one owo, but u know what's gonna happen dont ya, diluc in a dress, i guess?? it's endgame stuff that i want to happen but prob wont lol, now for the second chapter tags

Characters: Dainsleif (Genshin Impact), Diluc (Genshin Impact), Jean (Genshin Impact), Kaeya (Genshin Impact), Lisa (Genshin Impact), mentions and cameos of others, most of it applying to the second chapter

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2021-03-09

Updated: 2021-03-15

Packaged: 2022-04-25 22:08:42

Rating: Explicit

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 3

Words: 16,213

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Story URL: <https://archiveofourown.org/works/29934792>

Author

URL:

<https://archiveofourown.org/users/stardustupinlights/pseuds/stardustupinlights>

Summary:

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Abyss grates on his nerves. He wants nothing but to hide him away, if only until they can regulate the situation properly, yet knows he can't as well as he knows that Kaeya has a point.

"Please," he begs instead, thinking it might get him farther than arguing. "Just let me—"

"No," Kaeya takes a step towards him, and reaches out to take his hand, squeezing it. "No. Let's be honest here, Diluc, I'll be trying to communicate with them to the best of my ability. When that doesn't work, I'll have no issue using foreign tactics that could upset a stomach, including khemia. Anything to lighten the pressure over Mondstadt."

"Are you threatening them, or threatening me?"

Alternatively: a lot of suffering.

Relationships: Dainsleif & Kaeya (Genshin Impact), Diluc & Jean (Genshin Impact), Diluc/Kaeya (Genshin Impact), Jean/Lisa (Genshin Impact), Kaeya & Lisa (Genshin Impact)

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Series URL: <https://archiveofourown.org/series/2157138>

Comments: 38

Kudos: 386

1. and i couldn't be sure

Author's Note:

woo i've been figuring out how to write this fic for the better part of this week. i kept writing scenes that seemed to have no connection at all or like, basically short fics that had way too much speculation about missing/unreleased lore for my taste, but i started writing this wedding fic, as well as some other scenes, and i realized that i could... work with all this mess.

so here is it! first part is all suffering. you're all welcome to scream at me over at twitter i guess. i have A Lot of Feelings about kaeya and diluc and the background lore possibilities in general. i love it. you'll find my handle at the end notes. title is from taylor swift's evermore because... yes. if u know, u know.

well, that's enough talking. pls enjoy this, drop a kudos, a comment. oof.

brace yourselves, because im not done with the fluff part yet.

good reading!

"Diluc."

He moans back, hands digging into Kaeya's shoulders, a part of him wanting him to go faster, harder— but this is good, too. Sweat dripping from his skin, his hair a halo over his pillow. Kaeya's weight over his body, hands holding his thighs apart as he fucks into him slowly, dragging it out until it is all heat and feeling like they were born for this easy, lazy pace. Lips are on his neck, moving, forming the shape of his name, of love, calling him, which makes him blink through the haze and realize that he hasn't answered yet.

"What— what was the question?" He asks, because Kaeya's asked him something, he's sure, something that he couldn't distinguish over the

twitching of his hole around Kaeya's girth and the sweet feeling of it softly, slowly rubbing his prostate. As it is, he's having trouble getting his tongue untangled, barely feeling the tears of pleasure dripping from his eyes.

Kaeya chuckles. "You're seriously going to make me repeat myself, Master Diluc?"

A harsher thrust, just to jostle him, pour a louder moan from him, before going back to the languid pace, his skin breaking out in goosebumps. He wants to cum, but he wants Kaeya to stay where he is much more badly, which is why they've lasted so long, tangled together.

"Kaeya..." he sighs, arching his back, closing his eyes. "Ah... just... the question..."

"Would you marry me?"

The world stops, for a second. It's a very short one, but enough for at least three dozen emotions to go through his body, from shock to fear to confusion to realization to love to excitement. He must have thought about it too long, considering he gets an elaboration, but perhaps Kaeya just feels like he needs a hand, considering how he's tightening around his cock, stopped breathing at all.

"I'm not asking you to," he clarifies, and Diluc doesn't curb his disappointment at that, whining, making Kaeya's grip on him tighten in just the way he likes to be grabbed. "Just if you would."

"Yes," Diluc nods, rolls his hips, bites his lip to hide a gasp. It's *good*, fuck, so *big*. But the implication of marriage rings in his head. "Let's do it anyways, though. I know someone who can marry us quietly, the day after tomorrow at latest."

Kaeya laughs, a sound so warm that Diluc wonders how it is that he's the one with the Pyro Vision, but he'd rather not think about gods right now. Not when, if only in his heart, one is already fucking into him with the tenderness of years and years of longing, as if this was their first time still. It pulls him undone every single time.

"We can't marry yet." Kaeya presses a kiss against his neck. "Too much going on— besides, I would love to flaunt my pretty wife openly, when it does happen."

Diluc feels his face heating. "I'm not going to be your *wife*."

"No? But Diluc," and Kaeya fucks him a little harder, then, starts working up the pace in a way that has Diluc closing his eyes, throwing his head back, violently shivering as consistent moans run away from his mouth. "You already take me so well, don't you? Your hole has always been so greedy, just think of how many kids you'd give me..."

"I—*ah, ah, fuck!*" Before he can try to protest Kaeya's insistence to sway him into kinks that might make him unable to meet anyone's eyes for a week, he speeds up the pace, thrusting his hips with eagerness and such force that Diluc's sliding up the bed, and he has to let go of his shoulders in order to grab onto the sheets with one hand, the other coming up against the headboard. It wouldn't be the first time Diluc nearly gets a concussion from sex. "That—that's not *f-fair*..."

"Sorry, love," Kaeya chuckles, grips Diluc's thighs a little harder in warning before his hands stray to his knees and force him to bend. Diluc gasps, so loud it could almost be a yell, and his face grows hotter when he remembers that Dawn Winery's staff is probably already at work, and as such, no doubt able to hear him getting rammed the way he likes. "You know how I get when you give me something I want."

Diluc's about to protest the fact that he's not pregnant and doesn't plan to be in the foreseeable future, considering the ever-lingering threats upsetting the balance between nations, and even humans and gods, but the thoughts are complex enough that another thrust of Kaeya's hips make him forget them, and his mind goes completely blank as a hand wraps around his cock, squeezing before pumping in time with Kaeya's thrusts.

When he comes back to his body, cum is dripping from his hole, his throat is sore, and Kaeya's pressing kisses into his neck, teeth biting at skin—no doubt leaving marks.

Only one thought lingers in Diluc's mind, as tiredness washes over him. "I mean it, though. I'd marry you."

Kaeya pauses in his quest to turn his neck purple. "Even though you don't trust me?"

Diluc closes his eyes, running his hands through Kaeya's hair. It's long now, and so uneven it irks even him, who has no right to complain about hair, of all things, but it makes him want to grab a pair of scissors. "Don't be dense, Kaeya. Would I say yes otherwise?"

"After a good fuck? Maybe." And Diluc pulls his ear for that one, hiding his own amusement with an exasperated sigh. Kaeya lifts his head to look into his eyes, and Diluc squints at his askew eye-patch—he supposes that's a consequence of Kaeya sneaking into his room at night just for morning sex. "I'm serious, though."

"Kaeya," Diluc swallows, eyes dropping to his lips as heat surges up his face. "Kae, I can't keep pretending I don't want to trust you. I would take the risk of marrying you first."

"That's just bad strategy," Kaeya mumbles, but he doesn't appear disappointed. "It'll make sure to earn your trust first. You're a fair maiden, after all. I have to prove myself worthy of you."

Diluc rolls his eyes. "Whatever you say—now, about your tavern bill..."

"Eh."

Diluc stares at Kaeya's features under the sun; perfect brown skin catching undertones of gold from the light entering through the open window, gentle breeze ruffling his hair, like a painting set in motion. A usually covered, startlingly blue eye, and its mismatched pale twin caught under the weight of his furrowed eyebrows, his lips curled with uncharacteristic apprehension.

“I didn’t expect you to be mad about it,” Kaeya says, his tone carefully leveled, probably foretelling the emotions brewing in Diluc’s chest. “It’s just an expedition.”

“An expedition,” Diluc repeats, toys with his left glove, and has no choice but to drop his gaze to the chess board between them. He had been preparing for a game. Not this. “Seems redundant, considering Grand Master Varka is already off with the cavalry. It’s been more than a year since he left.”

“We both know he left me behind because he doesn’t trust me,” a tight-lipped smile. “A shame, too. I like his style, but we can’t say it’s unjustified. I was quite underhanded when I helped Jean deal with former Inspector Enoch and his cohorts, and continued to be so.”

Kaeya says *help*, as if the whole situation hadn’t been expert manipulation of the power vacuum of Diluc’s leave, as if he hadn’t been seeking his own justice. But Diluc doesn’t care about that right now; he’s rather busy looking at Kaeya’s travel clothes, his sheathed sword, the way he’s standing instead of sitting. Meaning to leave. So much for morning surprises.

“It’s only a week, correct?” Diluc asks, mentally going through his schedule. He’s sure his business partners will forgive a small delay. Kaeya tilts his head with a nod, giving nothing away about what he thinks of Diluc’s demeanor, not yet. “I’m coming with you.”

A sigh, just on the edge of exasperated. “We can’t weaken Mondstadt’s defense even more. It’s troubling times, and the Abyss Heralds—”

“That’s just it,” Diluc takes a deep breath, trying not to snap, but his tone is tight. Kaeya’s eyes soften just-so. “Jean should know better than to send you alone—”

“She can’t rely just on Amber for reports on Abyss Herald sightings,” Kaeya looks out the window, shaking his head, a hand tracing his belt. Fingers brush against his Vision. “And it was my idea, anyways. I’ll be fine on my own. There were a number of those roaming Khaenri’ah, if memory serves right.”

Diluc clenches his jaw, focusing on avoiding a flinch, but the reminder of Kaeya's relation to the kingdom hidden deep within the confines of the Abyss grates on his nerves. He wants nothing but to hide him away, if only until they can regulate the situation properly, yet knows he can't as well as he knows that Kaeya has a point.

"Please," he begs instead, thinking it might get him farther than arguing. "Just let me—"

"No," Kaeya takes a step towards him, and reaches out to take his hand, squeezing it. "No. Let's be honest here, Diluc, I'll be trying to communicate with them to the best of my ability. When that doesn't work, I'll have no issue using *foreign* tactics that could upset a stomach, including khemia. Anything to lighten the pressure over Mondstadt."

"Are you threatening them, or threatening me?"

Kaeya drops his hand, narrowing his eyes. Diluc can picture it all too clearly, how that gaze could turn into one of a killer. He wonders if all those times he beat Kaeya, even if they were fair as could be, would have gone the same if Kaeya had tapped into those long-buried instincts he's willing to use now. Perhaps they would both sport more scars than necessary. Perhaps Diluc wouldn't have left Mondstadt quite so angry, after that night.

"You were the one that told me not to choose you over anything. I would expect you to stick to the same demands."

Diluc struck a nerve he shouldn't have touched, but this time, instead of doubling down, he has to concede. *Shine true*, is Dawn Winery's motto. When it comes to Kaeya, he seems to have trouble sticking to the principles of that idea, to the discipline of seeking justice and leaving no stone unturned, of bleeding for the coming dawn. Sometimes, he wishes he was born selfish; perhaps like that, he would've set his foot down ages ago, been greedy and kept Kaeya for himself, asked him, through the pain of losing his father, through the pain of his truth, to run away with him.

He can picture it: Kaeya's lies and Diluc's money guaranteeing a life with no comfort amiss, no external forces to push on them from all sides.

But Kaeya's words haunt him, '*one never escapes Khaenri'ah, I don't think.*'

It would've been the same. The least Diluc can ask of him, now—

"Be safe," he snaps, already feeling like an open wound, looking away from Kaeya's face. "Come back. Don't make me drag you back."

Kaeya laughs, strangely hollow, as the pain of separation anxiety and uncertainty floats between them. "Can I ask something back of you, then?"

Diluc nods, still not looking directly at him, until he sees Kaeya getting down on one knee from the corner of his eye. He snaps his head towards him, then, gaze tilting down instead of up to meet his eyes, half expects to see the big, unbelievable fool pull out a ring *right now* out of all times, but all Diluc finds is a smile, honest and devastatingly beautiful.

Kaeya grabs Diluc's left hand, takes off the glove, and kisses his knuckles. "Trust me. Just this once. And I'll come back to you."

"I—" Diluc's breath catches in his throat; suddenly, it doesn't seem like they're talking about a dangerous expedition. "Kaeya, what are you—"

"*Please,*" and he's the one begging this time, struggling to maintain his smile, the word cutting through Diluc's chest and straight into his heart. "Allow me a drop of your trust, and I'll be back before you know it."

Diluc's mind flashes back to Kaeya's face when Abyss Heralds first started making a home for themselves in Mondstadt. How he had disappeared for a couple hours the day Dainsleif had come around to replenish his energy and hasn't returned since, the heavy set of Aether's shoulders when he last saw him. Before he can truly process the full weight of what it means, Diluc has to blink through hot tears, look away from Kaeya's half-desperate eyes for a few seconds.

A good-bye. How thoughtful. "Are you out of time?"

Kaeya sighs like it pains him to breathe. “Perhaps. You know I don’t believe in coincidences.”

“Were you going to make me stick with the lie about the expedition?” Diluc asks, not because he wants to dig his own dagger, but because he can’t believe he didn’t see it. He should’ve detected it the second Kaeya took off the eye-patch and declined a seat at his chess table, the second he woke up this morning to a cool hand in his hair. He’s only seeing it now because Kaeya’s changed his mind. “Were you trying to spare me this pain, or were you hoping I wouldn’t feel it at all, with that lie?”

“We both know it would be easier if you had killed me,” Kaeya tilts his head, ignores Diluc’s strangled noise of protest. “Either when you left, when Dainsleif first came, more recently... You could’ve poisoned my drink, made it even easier—”

“*Stop*,” Diluc begs, and before he knows it, he’s letting himself fall from his seat onto his knees, grabbing Kaeya’s hands, looking into his eyes, and struggling to remain upwards. “I couldn’t then, I can’t now. Stop trying to make me angry so that I’ll pretend to not *miss you*.”

“Don’t chase me,” Kaeya shakes his head, looking right through him as usual. Diluc can barely think through the heartbreak, already. “Don’t. Just trust me—”

“I already did. I allowed it just once, already, and I don’t want you to take it from me!” Diluc squeezes Kaeya’s hands, digs the nails of his uncovered hand into his gloves. His voice raises without his permission, as his emotions swirl into an uncomprehensive storm. “I didn’t ask about Dainsleif again, did I!? I knew that you didn’t want to keep it from me, I saw it in your eyes, it pained you, but you *had to*.”

“Yes,” Kaeya agrees, clenching his jaw. Diluc can see them, the cracks in his façade, one that he must have been working on for weeks in order to be able to have this conversation with a straight face. It seems like wasted effort, now. “Diluc, I didn’t know how to ask this of you. I figured it would be a better alternative to being taken. I don’t want it to get that close to Mondstadt.”

“Let me come with you,” Diluc closes his eyes, leans in to press their foreheads together. “Don’t do what I did. Please. Let me go with you, and I’ll do everything you say, just don’t—don’t leave. Don’t play into their ploys.”

Kaeya frees his hands from his iron grip, brings them up to his face and kisses him—hard, breathless, with all the purpose of remembering this moment and burning it into their minds, of getting across what he can’t put into words. He kisses back, hands holding on to Kaeya’s shoulders, and tastes his own tears, the bitter defeat.

“I’ll be back,” Kaeya promises, in panting breaths against his lips, and Diluc is shaking his head no, but he knows that there’s no turning back. Like two sides of a coin, day and night, ice and fire, they’re both just as stubborn. If the night his father died, Kaeya decided to stay and he decided to leave, then now their roles have reversed, and Diluc hates it with all his being, feels like it might burn him up inside or freeze him over. “Diluc, I’ll be back, if it’s the last thing I do—”

“It better not be,” Diluc laughs, wonders if he sounds delirious in it, because there’s no humor to be found, and it’s wet, helpless. “If it is, I will kill you myself, Kaeya.”

Kaeya snorts. “I’ve always counted on that.”

“You’re so cruel,” Diluc says, letting his head fall down on Kaeya’s shoulder. “Please. Be safe.”

Silence, and then something cool pressing into his palm. Diluc knows what it is without looking at it, and it makes him want to scream, to protest further, but he knows better than that, for once.

“This won’t do me good where I’m going,” Kaeya mumbles, and Diluc wraps his fingers around his Cryo Vision, feels it like a thousand paper cuts on his skin. “If I come back by the end of the week, then all this will have been for nothing, but otherwise... Mondstadt needs protection. You can’t falter. Jean will need you.”

“That’s so like you,” Diluc straightens up, swallowing as he looks into Kaeya’s eyes. He’s perfectly composed, but Diluc recognizes his demeanor as that of a man headed for his destiny with his head held high. Kaeya’s always been regal, in a way Diluc’s centuries-old ancestry never made him feel, but it’s only now that he can picture him, clear in his mind’s eye, as the last hope of a fallen kingdom. “I’m sure you have a thousand schemes running in the background right now, to make sure Mondstadt doesn’t fall apart without you.”

“Try a million. Sister Rosaria and Vile might develop a grudge against me, for the extra work,” Kaeya chuckles, leans in to steal another kiss, and then shrugs with a shoulder. “It’ll make it hard for you to feel like I’ve left.”

Diluc wants to shake him. He goes for a different kind of attack. “I love you.”

He sees the hurt flash across Kaeya’s eyes, yet doesn’t regret saying it. It might be the last time he gets to, for all he knows. The last time Kaeya gets to hear it.

“I know.” Kaeya says it with a finality that reminds Diluc of the last shovel of dirt upon someone’s grave, before the ground can set and truly swallow the coffin. Fresh, raw before his eyes. “I love you, too. Do you remember the vows we took?”

“To the Ordo?” Diluc blinks in confusion, but Kaeya shakes his head with a soft smile. “Then, what...?”

“I guess you’re not totally wrong, but I meant towards each other,” Kaeya breathes out, and the fickle memory of a sword held between them surfaces, afternoon sun painting the image gold, young determination running through them. “Sworn brothers in the eyes of Barbatos himself, under the blessing of the Ordo Favonius—a completely unnecessary ceremony, done just to respect the memory of Grand Master Arundolyn and Rostam. One of them lost to Khaenri’ah, the other to his grief.”

Diluc shivers. “Are you looking for us to end like that, as well?”

“No,” Kaeya kisses him again, and again, and again—Diluc wishes they could stay in this moment. “No, Rostam fell in battle. I have no intention of fighting if I can help it. I will respect my vows to you.”

“That’s terrifying,” Diluc licks his lips, runs his hands over Kaeya’s chest, his shoulders, his neck, his jaw, fingers ghosting over his lips. Commits him to memory. He can’t imagine life without—without *this*. “It’s *ridiculous*, Kaeya.”

“It’s a million plans,” Kaeya sighs, and grabs Diluc’s hand to lay a kiss upon it, again and again, like he can’t get enough of showing him his devotion. “I hope they’re enough to bring me back to you.”

And just like that, Diluc lets him go.

A week would pass, then two, then three.

Two months.

The Abyss, then, would call.

Kaeya was right.

There’s no sun in Khaenri’ah.

The moonlight scarcely reaches the surface of the underground city, to the point where it just creates more shadows. Time feels inexistent, and at the same time, all-consuming. The wind is wrong, soulless. The storms have such cold fury to them, Diluc can’t help but fear them more than he ever feared the weather before. The stars seem to cry out in pain, yet all Diluc can focus on is this throne room.

Kaeya told him not to chase him. Too bad he was invited.

“Kneel,” Dainsleif barks, and he didn’t need to—Diluc would have fallen to his knees on his own all the same, and it’s only Jean’s sharp look his way, Aether’s fast compliance, that keeps him stable enough to follow through

the motion without making a fool of himself. “I hereby introduce to you, born under the Blessing of the Abyssal Moon, the chosen heir and successor of the Eclipse Dynasty, from House Alberich, Prince Kaeya of Khaenri’ah.”

There’s deafening silence, as Kaeya’s gaze swipes across the four of them. It’s free of the obstruction of his eye-patch, an eye as blue as Dainsleif’s swirling with unknown power, and equally free for them to look at.

His hair spills freely over his back, even and as sleek as the materials of his throne, of the wrecked underground city, a gradient not unlike those strands of his fringe standing out, but his clothes show none of the expected glamour of a prince or king, as least not the kind that storybooks would have you believe in, not in the way Teyvat would display.

No, Kaeya’s clothes are purely military, similar to Dainsleif, built for practicality and hugging every inch of skin visible, so unlike the garbs Kaeya chooses to wear for himself. The only thing about it that differentiates from Dainsleif’s outfit is that it’s newer, fresher, the fabric as dark as it’s meant to be, the details far more intricate, the gold shining through more clearly, and the structure of it even more practical—no vest, but a buttoned jacket that is meant to both look regal and take blows.

He wears no crown. Instead, on his forehead, sits the empty husk of a diadem, wrapping around his head, where a jewel is clearly meant to decorate him and indicate his status. He’s cut-throat beautiful, and worst of all, he looks right at home, sitting on a throne that must chill him to the bone.

Diluc can’t get his thoughts straight long enough to even open his mouth beyond dumbfounded, jaw-dropped staring, but Kaeya meeting his eyes stunts him even more, as he finds a cold stare.

There’s no recognition. No relief, no warmth, no amusement, nor even a hint that Kaeya has ever known him. Yet their eyes hold for too long for everyone around them not to notice, and Diluc chooses, as Kaeya examines over Jean and Aether and then Dainsleif, that he’ll foolishly believe Kaeya is lying right now. His trust remains strong.

Kaeya leans back against his throne, tilts his head, and sighs. “Rise, Bough Keeper.”

Dainsleif does, and his posture is that of a soldier, a knight devoted to his prince—but Diluc can now see the similarities between them, the weight of something they share in the air, something that’s different for each of them yet still the same. Dainsleif, the Bough Keeper, may have once been the chosen heir, and the uncrowned prince. May have once been sent away the same way Kaeya was, with his own impossible mission.

Diluc closes his eyes for a brief second, and then keeps them on Kaeya, willing his mind not to wander. He got what he came here for. Now he just has to figure out how to take him with him.

“This lost its point so long ago,” Kaeya says, tapping the diadem on his forehead with his fingers, leaning his elbow on the throne, his chin on his fist, and the flare of it, the grace—that’s all his. That’s familiar. But it lacks any real sense of enjoyment behind it. Kaeya’s eyes remain cold. “All of it, for a pearl?”

Dainsleif clenches his fists, nodding. “All of it, my prince.”

Kaeya stands and walks down the steps of his throne, until he’s within distance to lay a hand on Dainsleif’s shoulder, squeeze. An understanding that Diluc has never been privy to passes between them, before that hand falls away.

“Come on, then.” Kaeya turns towards Aether, looking down at him as if seeing him for the first time, and Diluc’s chest flares with a phantom pain. The Cryo Vision in his pocket burns. “You have someone to find. And we have a lot to discuss.”

Diluc and Jean are promptly thrown into prison cells, even deeper underground, and it’s not long before what sounds like battle unleashes in the floors above them, easily heard, as they stand weaponless and locked. Perhaps forgotten.

So much for coming along to help. They didn't take their Visions, at least, but it's a small consolation in the grand scheme of things. There are no gods to make them feel grateful for them here, and creating a swirl of flames will hardly get them out of a cell with concrete walls, and a mechanism that Diluc can't make head or tails of to open the sliding door. It's more likely to suffocate them.

Jean takes a deep breath. "How are you faring, Diluc?"

He thinks about it, just for a second, closing his eyes as he remembers the words from Kaeya's father, and the temperature in the cell seems to intensify. "I'm not sure yet. All I know is that we need to stick to the plan. We already knew we were being separated and locked up, even if we hoped otherwise."

"I don't know," Jean says, and he opens his eyes to meet her gaze, painful and honest. "He—he didn't seem to recognize us. He might have forgotten, like Dainsleif, and Aether's sister. He might not want to leave."

"It's only been two months, Jean," Diluc shakes his head, but his heart hurts at the idea. He wants to believe the hope in his chest instead. "Dainsleif and Lumine—they're centuries old. And you know Kaeya, he... he wouldn't forget. Even if he wanted to."

"I shouldn't have let him go," Jean breathes out, not for the first time since Kaeya left, but Diluc stopped being angry at her a long time ago. The only one responsible for this is Kaeya. "I'm so sorry, Diluc—"

"Don't let this place get to you, Jean," Diluc crosses his arms, staring at the ground. "It's wrong. We're not meant to be here, and Kaeya has too much of Mondstadt in him to be able to fully belong. He knows that."

A great silence is born between them, as Jean's eyes fill with unshed tears of anguish, and Diluc can't do much but to squeeze her shoulder, let his Vision act up in the space between them to bring them some warmth, but perhaps Kaeya was right about that, too, when once upon a time he told him that Khaenri'ah will chill you to the bone, no matter where you are, like some lingering curse.

As a gift from Teyvat's gods, his Vision feels meaningless here, the heat it provides easily put to shame by any old campfire, even though it's been effective to fight so far. The power of the gods offers no solace here. But he won't give up.

Jean nods as her resolve comes back, releasing some of the oppressive weight in Diluc's lungs, trapping his fear, but before they can try to figure out the door again, it snaps open.

Kaeya stands on the other side, and openly sighs with relief. "Ah, there you are."

Several things happen at once. First, Jean calls Kaeya's name as if she's seeing a phantom, then her sword and Diluc's claymore are thrown to the floor between them, and Diluc is advancing in, heat gathered on his hands, to do what he isn't sure—only for Kaeya's hand to reach out, moving closer faster than Diluc's eyes can follow, and it grips him around the neck, slamming him against the wall of the cell, ice icicles floating around him even though his Vision is in Diluc's pocket.

"Now, now, I know we're all excited," Kaeya chuckles, patting Diluc in the cheek, but he doesn't meet his eye, this time, and his grip is iron—Diluc would fight back if the hand against his skin wasn't ice cold in warning, and if his air intake wasn't low enough to be genuinely concerning. Kaeya turns towards Jean. "But I didn't spend two months here only to have my plans go awry now. Dain could have given me a warning, but I see what he offers and understand his point. Adjustments have been made, so I need *diplomats* right now, not a mess of an Acting Grand Master and a Ragnvindr heir."

"What?" Jean chokes out, and Diluc feels like this must be the hundredth time they've asked such a thing, between the two of them, ever since Dainsleif and Aether walked into Mondstadt together. He's tired of not knowing things, so he grunts in agreement, even though it makes Kaeya tighten his grip on his neck. "Kaeya, what are you—"

"Jean, get the weapons, please. I wouldn't do it like this, but it's a necessity. We must hurry," Kaeya smiles, sheepish, but the icicles pointing at them grow sharper. She steels her expression, glaring at Kaeya as she moves to

retrieve them, sheathing her sword and gripping Diluc's claymore with both her fists. Diluc has a wild second where he pictures Jean taking a swing at Kaeya, knows she's fully capable of it, but that might just be the lack of oxygen affecting him. Kaeya looks at Diluc, and his smile softens. "Love, I've missed you terribly. I told you not to come, but let's save our greetings for when we're back home, shall we?"

Diluc is overcome, in under a second, with an incredible surge of both love and rage, Kaeya's hand finally falling from his neck. The sudden rush of air to his lungs has him doubling over, but Kaeya steadies him in his arms, kind hands on his shoulders even as the icicles don't go away. Diluc is almost tempted to push him away, because his neck will surely bruise, but this contact, soft, caring and tender—he's gone too long without it. It's too honest, and he can't draw back from it.

"Leave it to you to be an asshole after two months of *nothing*," Diluc wheezes out, coughing, and Kaeya's answering hum seems to hold some amusement—his starry eyes twinkle, when Diluc finally straightens back up, and digs a hand into his pocket to hand him his Vision. Kaeya's eyes light up even further as he takes it. "I'm so mad at you right now."

"Great!" Kaeya nods, still avoiding his gaze, which makes dread sink to the bottom of Diluc's stomach, a sense of foreboding coming over him. He looks at Jean, and gestures towards Diluc. "You're in charge of keeping Master Ragnvindr in line, Jean, no matter what happens. Hope you don't mind it."

Jean looks between the two of them, and seems disappointed that these are her friends. "I miss Lisa."

Kaeya's plan—

Diluc screams, but Jean does her job, her eyes wide with horror, and keeps him in her grip, somehow finding the strength to hold him back. Kaeya hits the floor, then, and blood starts to pool almost immediately.

Dainsleif looks back at them, expression blank, sheathing his sword without a care for the blood dripping from it, Khaenri'ahns around them speaking and gradually rising their voices until there's screaming, as if they're coming to an agreement, and weapons are drawn—but not against them. Not again Dainsleif. The Spiral Abyss seems to shiver with the weight of five-hundred years of sorrow.

As Dainsleif turns his back on them, Diluc finally shakes off the shock and finds the strength to slip from Jean's grip, ignoring the way she calls his name in alarm, as he rushes to Kaeya, falls to his knees, stains his clothes with blood—Diluc doesn't look at the wound. He can't.

“You—” He starts, as Kaeya open his eyes to look at him, a grin on his features. Diluc feels like screaming until his throat is no more, and can't bring himself to do more than trace his face, too scared of making it worse to touch him, move him. “This—what did you *do*—”

“I told them, when I got here,” Kaeya chokes out, and blood spills from his lips, pain flashing in his eyes, so Diluc shushes him, hunching over him, but he's ignored. Jean appears in the corner of his eye, kneels beside them and uses her Vision—healing, but it might not be enough. “*‘Mondstadt is not your enemy. We're being misled’*. The orthodox factions needed to see this, a Teyvat-raised prince bleeding for them, loyal to them but protecting the peace. The Ordo Favonius and the Ragnvindr home, kneeling in my blood. It's a bunch of politics—”

“Stop talking,” Diluc snaps, shaking his head. “You're—I can't believe you, getting stabbed for *politics*, Kaeya, this is not a game—”

A hand wraps around the back of his neck, pulls him down until Kaeya's lips meet his ear, and four words are whispered with conviction, begging, too low for Jean to catch it and making it far more intimate, as if people around them weren't rallying, too inspired to dwell in their centuries-old grudges and jealousy, finally seeing the truth and adjusting their world views. Diluc hasn't seen Aether since they got separated, but judging by the way Dainsleif disappeared, they're off to deal with the Abyss Princess.

The Tsaritsa might just get what she wants, in the end, if she's willing to bargain with Mondstadt and Khaenri'ah instead of exploiting the Abyss, either unknowing or unseeing of what truly dwells within. The horrors of Celestia could crumble within weeks.

Diluc straightens up, looking at Kaeya's pale skin, and reaches out to run his fingers over his lips. It's a simple answer, with no hesitation. "Yes. You have my trust."

Kaeya's eyes twinkle, his mouth curls into a sharp grin.

Ice freezes over his blood, and Jean gasps. "He's healing!"

2. i had a feeling so peculiar

Notes for the Chapter:

so. i had to cut this into more chapters. don't be surprised if i end up with a fourth... sorry uwu. and thank you for the sweet comments, as well! you're all lovely

please enjoy diluc being a dutiful bridezilla.

“I hate these flowers.”

Kaeya hums, settling a hand over his hip, and sending Diluc a bewildered look. “These are Calla Lilies.”

“So?” Diluc runs a finger over the delicate petals, eyeing the bouquet like it’s some sort of anomaly found in his soup, and little Flora looks halfway to using her gardening scissors to pry his fingers off her plants. Kaeya sends her an encouraging smile. “It doesn’t go with the rest of the décor at all, they look too simple. Perhaps if we get something red with them...”

“You said you didn’t want red flowers, though,” Kaeya sets a hand on Diluc’s shoulder, patting it. “Come, now, Master Diluc, stop harassing Flora’s arrangements and discuss this further with Miss Adeline over a few samples instead. I’m sure she can help you make up your mind.”

Diluc shrugs off his hand with the elegance of a miffed kitten, and turns towards Flora. “I’m sorry, Flora, would it be too troublesome to send some samples to Dawn Winery this afternoon?”

“Of course not, Master Diluc,” Flora nods, but her smile is a bit forced, looking between the two of them with curiosity. As it happens often now, her eyes linger a little too long on his lack of an eye-patch. He should’ve worn it today. “I’m sure Donna and I would be able to provide better bouquets if you told us about the occasion, though...”

“That’s irrelevant, I’m afraid,” Kaeya interrupts, before Diluc can pull a spontaneous lie out of his ass. “Master Diluc is just looking to spice up the look of his office. He has a particularly unique, *beautiful* vase he wishes to relocate, and he’s having trouble finding a more appropriate arrangement for it.”

“A menace,” Diluc mumbles, though it’s unsure whether he’s talking about Kaeya or the vase. It might be both. He sighs, gesturing towards Kaeya without sparing him a look. “I’m afraid Sir Kaeya is right, but I’ll be off, Flora. I have other manners to attend to. I’ll be sure to give you a tip later today, for wasting your time this morning, and for the flowers.”

Flora perks up as if she’s just won the Harpastum. “No problem, Master Diluc! Have a nice day!”

Kaeya shamelessly grabs Diluc’s elbow and leads him away, waving at Flora with a smile, but his amusement vanishes as soon as they turn their backs on her, leaning in closer to Diluc to whisper. “I thought you said you would get everything from Liyue in order to avoid this.”

“The samples for flowers from Liyue were embarrassing,” Diluc protests, and steps away from Kaeya as they walk, together but not so obviously so, towards the Ordo Favonius. “I liked the Qingxins, and I need some contrast. Their best bouquets were all white and pink, or purple, and I dislike the aroma of Glaze Lilies.”

“It’s too sweet,” Kaeya agrees, but he’s still frustrated. “You could’ve sent Adeline, or even Elzer, or *anyone* else. The city already knows you were looking for tailoring fabrics, and that you bought centerpieces from Marjorie.”

“It’s fine,” Diluc rolls his eyes, and Kaeya has a dangerous feeling that their roles are being unfortunately reserved in this moment. Diluc isn’t usually this careless, but Kaeya supposes that he’s always been like this when he’s excited. His deadpan expression can’t fool him. “They didn’t notice for this long, they aren’t going to notice now.”

“I didn’t want any rumors going around at all,” Kaeya nods at the knights on the front doors of the Ordo as they go in, but they just stare at Diluc, which has him looking forwards to the boot camp Jean is organizing more than ever. He’s always enjoyed torturing—*training* nosy people. “You shouldn’t even *be* here.”

“I can’t give Jean and Lisa their invitation through the *mail*,” Diluc huffs, as Kaeya guides him into his office. Jean and Lisa won’t come in until later, busy with some research that Lisa’s been working on, but Diluc insisted he would wait for them. “No one will question me having a meeting with the Grand Master.”

“I could just give it to them,” Kaeya drops into his chair, behind his desk, and Diluc makes himself comfortable by starting a pot of tea over his chimney, his back to him. Kaeya stares at his relaxed shoulders and his lack of response and feels a smile, along with exasperation, curl his lips. “Honestly, who knew you’d be so bossy about our wedding?”

“You’re the one who made your proposal so disgustingly romantic,” Diluc turns his head, just so he can allow Kaeya to see his scrunched-up nose at the memory. “I’m just breaking even.”

“I was *dying*, if you recall,” Kaeya snorts, hand unconsciously coming to rest over his stomach, where a new scar sits. Dainsleif really didn’t pull his punches, even for the sake of acting; Kaeya’s bed rest weeks were insufferable. “We were in my homeland, at the end of the world, I was fatally wounded and you took me in your arms—”

“And whose fault is that?” Diluc audibly rolls his eyes, even though he’s turned his back on him again. Deeming the tea ready, Diluc pulls out his tea set – the same he used when *he* was Cavalry Captain, showing just how untouched Kaeya’s left this office – and sets both sugar cubes and spoons along the two cups on their saucers, all perfectly in harmony with proper etiquette. Kaeya can barely hide his amusement at it. “You were the one making up ridiculously dangerous plans to inspire people...”

“You were the only that came looking for me, despite being told not to,” Kaeya watches Diluc approach his desk, tray in his hands, and sighs, his

expression dreamy. “Barbatos, you’ll make such a lovely wife.”

“Shut up, or I’ll be marrying Donna instead,” Diluc snaps, settling the tray down with a little too much force, as Kaeya laughs. “I was asked to go, which is different from chasing you. Months of not knowing about you made me so *mad*, I wasn’t going to let you get away with it.”

“That’s a funny way to say you were worried sick,” Kaeya chuckles, and takes his tea from the tray, sipping a taste. He barely holds back a wince; perhaps Diluc should practice his tea concentration techniques, but he’d rather not comment on it. Diluc pours so much sugar in it he practically drinks it anyways, so he wouldn’t tell the difference. How can a bartender be this careless? “We’ve had this argument what, ten, eleven times since I’ve been back?”

“Thirteen, actually,” Diluc glares at him over his tea, and licks his lips, distracting Kaeya from his eyes. “I’ve been counting.”

Kaeya shrugs, blows a kiss his way, and dedicates him a sheepish smile. “That’s fair enough. But all your stress about the wedding, however…”

“You told me I could do whatever I wanted for it,” Diluc reaches with his left for another sugar cube, but Kaeya grabs his hand and leans off his chair to kiss it, lips brushing against the band over his ring finger, hiding under a thick glove. The heat of Diluc’s gaze has issue flaming under the gesture, but he still tries with his words. “And if I want to get local flowers for my ___”

“—*our*—” Kaeya corrects, not for the first time.

“—our wedding,” Diluc blinks, but he doesn’t seem to like the wording. “Then I’ll get them. Stop whining. No one will know until afterwards.”

“Fine,” Kaeya tangles their fingers together, gulping down his tea before Diluc notices the way he keeps recoiling at the taste. He doesn’t want his wife to get upset. “I suppose you *are* going to wear that special outfit for it, so…”

Diluc blushes like a maiden under scrutiny. “Be quiet, *husband*, or you’ll sleep with the grapevines.”

Kaeya laughs despite the threat, picturing it all too well: Diluc’s pretty self, wearing a lovely wedding dress, throwing the bouquet of flowers he’s trying so hard to find at his face and closing the front door on him. He doesn’t seem to find as much amusement as Kaeya does at the idea, probably because he’s hoping to get fucked on his wedding night within an inch of his life, but his expression is pleasant, and his gloved fingers squeeze Kaeya’s hand.

There’s a knock at his door, and Jean’s voice asking if he’s in, interrupting Kaeya’s jolly seconds of self-indulgence via staring at his fiancé, and he gestures at Diluc. “Go off, then, tell them the news.”

Diluc narrows his eyes. “I’m not your head maid.”

But he still stands up, opens the door, serves Jean her own cup of tea, and hands her the wedding invitation addressed to both her and Lisa. Jean stares at it blankly for a few seconds, and then sighs with relief so great she must have been carrying this weight around for years, smiling at them.

“*Finally*,” she goes, shaking her head, her cheeks heating as her eyes moisten up lightly. Diluc shifts uncomfortably at the emotional response, so Kaeya is the one that stands up and sets a hand on her shoulder, winking at her when she stares at him with a smile. “Well, congratulations! I can’t wait to frame those pictures.”

“What, so Diluc can hunt you down and burn them?” Kaeya chuckles, earning a half-hearted glare. “It was supposed to be a far quieter affair, but Diluc’s planning is getting out of hand. I think he even invited my father, and we all know he stabbed him last time they spoke.”

“I did not invite him,” Diluc protests, rolling his eyes, but he seems fascinated by his teacup. “I did consider it, just to rub it in his face.”

“I think stabbing him sufficed, he deserved that one—”

“Ah, that does remind me!” Jean sits up, leaving her teacup back on the tray—Kaeya notices with amusement that the drink is practically untouched. “Does this make Diluc prince consort, now?”

Kaeya blinks. “Well, I guess I’ve been crowned, but—”

“Let’s go with no,” Diluc mumbles, as thrilled as Kaeya is about the idea of becoming Khaenri’ahn royalty. Seven know, that’s a whole political mess that hasn’t been sorted yet. Just thinking about the work regarding it that he’ll have to get back to after the honeymoon is enough to give Kaeya a headache. “I have enough royalty with the city’s nicknames to last me a lifetime.”

“I guess you’re right,” Jean pauses, smile widening. Kaeya suddenly has a bad feeling. “What about children?”

Diluc almost drops his teacup to the ground, his face going red. “That’s, uh —”

“Undecided,” Kaeya finishes, hoping to avoid a crisis. They’ve spoken about it and gotten... resources, so it might happen, but nothing is certain. “For now, I think I’m enough of a handful for Diluc to deal with alone.”

“That I agree with.” Jean chuckles, her eyes shining with a light that reminds Kaeya of her secret collection of romance novels. He didn’t mean to find them, of course. He was just looking for autopsies. “Ah, I’m so happy for you! It’s so exciting...”

The subject changes to flowers, somehow, as Jean starts asking about what Diluc’s planned, and Kaeya mentally taps out as he returns to his desk, ready to sort out the paperwork that he has left to do before the wedding. The thought of a couple red-haired, clear-eyed children running around Dawn Winery slips into his mind as a pleasant image, but it’s fleeting before he locks it up in a box for much, much later. He wants to have Diluc for himself, for a while.

He listens without attention to the lull of conversation around him, and can barely keep his eyes off Diluc when he’s not working, noting that what

people say about brides is truth—they truly do glow with happiness. He leaves, eventually, and surprisingly allows Kaeya to press a kiss over his lips, lingering in his arms afterwards with a longing gaze, before stepping out the door.

Jean looks at Kaeya, a knowing look in her eye. “He’s very excited.”

Kaeya thinks of all the flower samples flooding Dawn Winery, the chefs from Liyue scrambling to present their best menus, the tailors their best designs, particularly for what Diluc will be wearing, and how the whole house already smells like there’s been three weddings over the last two days.

“That’s an understatement.”

“Oh dear,” Lisa looks at Kaeya with surprised eyebrows, but her expression quickly becomes amused. “The missus kicked you out already? The wedding is next week.”

Kaeya kicks his travel bag and shrugs. “His dress arrived from Liyue, and he doesn’t want me to look at it before the wedding.”

“I see,” Lisa nods, and opens her front door further, inviting him in. He’ll sure have a good time, crashing on her couch, because he sold his flat in the city around the time he returned to Mondstadt, after Khaenri’ah, at Diluc’s insistence. An oversight, clearly, or perhaps a scheme he fell into while in his weakened state. “I’ve seen the design, you know, and I warn you not to drool or you’ll ruin the fabric.”

“Will I be able to grope?” Kaeya asks, and Lisa laughs against her hand, keeping it down for the sake of her neighbors not noticing him crashing here. “I was also ordered to be at Angel’s Share tonight for my bachelor’s party, which—”

“That’s so unlike you, drinking,” Lisa quips. “I fail to see the problem.”

“It has somehow gotten out that I’m getting married, you see,” Kaeya sighs, pressing a hand against his forehead. “Mondstadt can be a terrifying place when it comes to getting asked nosy questions. Half the Ordo will be there, and who knows how many well-meaning, disappointed grandmas. Diluc is going to kill someone.”

“Well, we can surely accompany you, then, filter people out,” Lisa gestures at her couch, and Kaeya notices the two empty glasses of wine over her coffee table. Seems he’s interrupting. “Jean is taking a bath, but I’m sure she won’t mind it. She’s almost as excited about this wedding thing as Diluc.”

Kaeya clicks his tongue. “I doubt it. I got measured for my reception suit again last week, though I haven’t actually seen it, but I was *told*—”

“—he sure is bossy—”

“—that my eye-patch is uninvited,” Kaeya brings a hand up to it and lifts it, rolling his eyes before snapping it back in place. Lisa giggles. “Diluc doesn’t understand my style. My culture! You know how much someone from Khaenri’ah would pay for that eye?”

“You should’ve thought of that before proposing, dear.”

“I was *dying*,” Kaeya laughs, and falls onto Lisa’s favorite armchair with a sigh. “But I guess that’s a bad excuse. I wanted to marry him before I wanted to fuck him, so I would have ended up here anyways.”

“That’s a... romantic way to put it,” Lisa sits back on the couch, humming. “Aren’t you excited, though? I’ve heard all this talk about Diluc establishing a dictatorial regime over Dawn Winery, but not even a whisper of how you’re feeling.”

Kaeya closes his eyes and considers this, sighing, but the only word that comes to him is peace. He remembers, quite clearly, growing up with Diluc and falling so deeply in love that he knew no one else would ever matter, that he would care about little else but him. He remembers the innocence of their first kiss, full of childish curiosity, and then his own boldness when

they grew older and he tricked Diluc into kissing for *practice*—one of his best lies, if he says so himself.

He remembers his silent anguish and his non-beating heart, after Diluc left, and that breath of fresh air after returning his Vision. Finally, he recalls Khaenri'ah, Diluc's figure dashing after him, taking in his pretended coldness and aggression with nothing but a determined eye, and the look on his face when they both thought he would die. Jean has no idea how much he owes her.

"I'm happy," Kaeya says, finally, so soft he almost wants to double check he didn't just think it. He opens his eyes, and Lisa looks at him with a thoughtful gaze, seems to find something she likes, for her smile is nothing but kind, almost proud. "There's not much more to it. I don't think I'll cry during the ceremony, if that's what you're worrying about—I'll have tissues for Diluc in my pockets, though."

"And I'll have some for Jean," Lisa claps her hands together. "Who would have thought, that our dear Quartermaster, a *prince* so cold to the touch, would actually find his love?"

Kaeya can't help but snort. "Lisa, I found love the day Crepus Ragnvindr loaded me into his carriage, invited a spy into his home, and shoved me into a playroom with his son."

"Well, there's nothing I can say to that, other than you're lucky!" She stands up and heads into the kitchen, only to come back with a third glass of wine, and a different bottle—Death After Noon, as if he won't be drinking it later tonight from the hands of his fiancé. Lovely. "A toast, perhaps?"

Kaeya takes his glass with grace, and allows her to fill it to the brim, which is hardly proper etiquette, but she knows neither of them care about that. After she fills her own, they click them together, raising them into the air.

"To Diluc's wedding garter," he says, and Lisa chokes on her wine. Kaeya's smirks. "I'll have fun pulling it off with my teeth."

“Oh, sweet Barbatos,” Lisa coughs into her fist, laughter trying to bubble from her chest. “You’ve ruined the mood.”

Diluc has Kaeya come over the night of their wedding’s eve, and he’s unnecessarily nervous about it. Something has taken hold of him over the last couple months, planning the wedding, and Adeline informed him, thinking that she’s *very funny*, that he was just going through brand-new-bride pre-wedding jitters, and thus he was over-planning. She had been stuck sampling cake with him for three hours after that.

As such, he’s been bossing and bouncing Kaeya around not unlike he’s another member of Dawn Winery’s staff. He had him stay with Lisa first, until whispers starting going around that he was marrying *her* – he *will* find the traitor that leaked the wedding rumors, have them *suffer* – and then sent him to the Ordo Favonius headquarters to try his chances with Albedo and Klee.

Kaeya didn’t get a vote on the wedding plans, barely chimed in to help him decide on a date, and doesn’t even know, who, exactly, is invited, beyond Jean’s family and his closest business partners. He doesn’t even know what he’s wearing, other than his ceremonial uniform, which Diluc is going to fix tonight, because the last thing he needs is Kaeya being too stupid tall to properly fit into what’s supposed to be a tailored suit. It happened several times when they were teenagers, that by the time their suits arrived, Kaeya had grown up to the point of the clothes looking awkward on him.

Sure, they were teens going through growth spurts back then, but who knows how much growing Kaeya truly has left in him? They were the same height and weight in muscle when Diluc left Mondstadt, and he came back to Kaeya towering over him and having shoulders perfect to grab onto while getting railed against his dresser—

Diluc’s a mess, in short. When Kaeya was bleeding out in his arms, all he could feel was a void, darker than when his father died, and he realized he couldn’t do it again. He didn’t have it in him to restart, this time without having anything to fall back into once he was done grieving. So when Kaeya asked if he would marry him, so softly against his ear, blood pooling

on the floor and staining his skin, Diluc had said yes, wanting to buy into that fantasy. And afterwards, he found that he still meant it.

The rings are a family heirloom. Diluc's wearing the ring that his father had made for Kaeya, identical to his own, back when he put him in his will. Kaeya's wearing Crepus' actual wedding ring. They probably weren't supposed to exchange them, but Diluc never wanted Crepus' ring, especially after his death, and it felt like it was only fair to have Kaeya wear it instead, as a way to officially welcome him back into the Ragnvindr estate.

The replica, with Kaeya's initials—it's better than his father's, which has the Ragnvindr family crest, and has been passed down through generations. Besides, they're getting simple silver bands made for themselves, since going around with gold rings in their lines of work is just impractical. It would be terrible if they melted, or froze over.

He must admit that he might be overblowing what's meant to be a quiet event, but Diluc always liked fairytales, and it seems that the remnants of his innocence had taken over and decided he *would* have a fairytale wedding. The dress had been his own idea, even if inspired by generations of Ragnvindr men and women wearing whatever they wanted without a care for others' opinions when he opened old, dusty portrait albums for reference. They're native to the City of Freedom, after all, and Venti did agree to marry them, in exchange for – *obviously* – free wine, and getting to play a few songs.

Kaeya's wide-eyed, dumbfounded response of '*uh, sure*' when he suggested the dress was worth it, as well, and he must admit the tailor outdid himself with it. Looking at it in the mirror, it's truly a piece of art, not a mistake to be seen. He's in love with it.

"Master Diluc, he's here!" Adeline calls from downstairs, and one of the maids that was helping him remove the dress curses. Diluc agrees with the sentiment, gesturing for the other maid to close his bedroom door, since it would be terrible for Kaeya to catch sight of it the night before. The ceremony rehearsal had been close enough already. "Master Kaeya, please, you can't look at the dress!"

Diluc steps out of it with difficulty, and doesn't bother trying to remove the veil as he shrugs on a bathrobe and helps the maids slip the dress back into its travel bag, closing the zipper with more force than he would use if Kaeya weren't determined to ruin surprises planned for him. There's a knock at the door, and the maids look at him for guidance, but Diluc just sighs, and walks over to open it himself.

Kaeya's eyes fall directly on the veil, and they light up, but seems immediately disappointed by his lack of a dress when they fall upon his body. "Aw, I was too late."

"Stop terrorizing my staff by storming the place," Diluc rolls his eyes, and holds open the door so the maids can slip out, carrying the dress between them. Thankfully, not a hint of it peeks through the travel bag. "You're just here to try on your suit, since the tailor added a few last minute details I wanted to our outfits."

"Not even for a kiss?" Kaeya asks, already leaning down, but Diluc turns his head, crossing his arms. Kaeya scoffs against his cheek. "You're not even a virgin, love—"

"Don't start and get in here," Diluc grabs him by the ear and pulls, ignoring Kaeya's protests as he guides him to stand in front of the full-body mirror. "Clothes off."

"I do like it when you get bossy, but this is—" Kaeya's interrupted by Diluc opening his bathrobe to properly re-tie it, no doubt catching sight of the lingerie he was *planning* to wear under the dress. He'll have to wear the back-up pieces now, to keep the surprise. "Hey, are you trying to torture me? Because I've been good, and I don't deserve this treatment."

"You're not staying tonight if you keep it up," Diluc warns, and Kaeya lights up instantaneously. Diluc is quick to squash that, even as his nerves flare in anticipation. "In your *own* room. Not with me. The wedding is tomorrow, and someone has to entertain all the guests while I get ready."

"Unfair," Kaeya grumbles under his breath, but starts taking off his clothes, tossing them towards the bed without a care until he's standing in his

underwear, sighing heavily. “You know I’ve missed you, right? The last couple of months have been insane.”

Diluc swallows, opening the zipper to Kaeya’s suit and bringing it out. At least he’s kind enough to keep the fact that *he’s* been insane to himself. He knew he wouldn’t regret this engagement. “I’m just excited, is all.”

“I know,” Kaeya smiles at him, soft, and takes the shirt and pants that Diluc offers him, looking at them with approval. He glances at the vest and jacket in Diluc’s hands. “White and gold in blue?”

“I took inspiration from your, *ah*, Khaenri’ahn clothes,” Diluc clears his throat, hands him the pieces, ignoring his own flustered self; Kaeya’s attires while on Khaenri’ah, that indicate his prince status, are quite... appealing. He even got him jewelry to match. “You can wear it with no tie, or I have one to go with it. Whatever you prefer, since it’s for the reception.”

“So I do get a choice in this wedding!” Kaeya considers the white shirt, the dark blue vest with patterned details in gold, and the dark blue jacket and pants, nodding. “I’ll try on the tie, but you know me.”

Diluc sighs. “You like having your tits out.”

Kaeya laughs as he buttons the vest, shaking his head, but the way he bites his lip, eyes narrowing, makes him nervous. “I’m serious, though. I do miss spending time with you that doesn’t revolve around the wedding, or politics.”

“I...” Diluc looks at the floor, his feet, his toes painted gold with lacquer from Liyue, and winces. “I realize I’ve been neglecting you, but I’m just...”

“You want tomorrow to be perfect,” Kaeya sighs, and Diluc glances at him to see him adjusting the jacket over the vest, the neck of it with the shirt. He looks more handsome than Diluc though he would; it seems the tailor got everything right, since Kaeya’s shoulders look strong, his chest appropriately straining against his shirt the way it’s supposed to, the pants the right length. He’s pleased. “I get that, and I don’t want to take that away, but you know you won’t have to act like this tomorrow.”

Diluc tries not to pout and fails. “It’s not like I’ll go crazy.”

“I just mean that you need to remember to enjoy yourself *during* the wedding,” Kaeya turns his body to stare at his ass and whistles. “A good tailor. But you understand what I’m trying to say, right? You’ve had your fun planning, but now you need to start relaxing, and trust everyone else that’s helped you. It’ll be fine.”

“I get it,” Diluc approaches him, then, running a hand over the vest to get a couple of wrinkles out. Kaeya grabs onto his hands and brings both up to his lips, kissing his fingers and then his wrists. Diluc shivers. “I’m... tired, but I don’t think my body’s caught up to it yet.”

“You can catch up after I’m done with you tomorrow,” Kaeya winks, his lips curled into a mischievous smirk. Diluc feels a thrill down his spine, the spike of his nerves. “You’ve been planning the best Ragnvindr wedding of the last... century, perhaps? And all those weddings were *public*.”

“I’m not putting in this effort in for the guests, though,” Diluc frowns, allowing Kaeya to bring him into his arms, hands around his waist. He doesn’t hold onto his shoulders because he doesn’t want to wrinkle the suit. “It’s for us. I know you haven’t been that excited, but—”

“I *am* excited,” Kaeya leans in and nuzzles his nose, making eye contact, and Diluc outwardly swoons. Kaeya grips his hips harder. “I’m *very* excited, but I know I wasn’t the one planning my wedding when I was ten.”

Diluc blushes. “I did *not*—”

“I read your diary.”

“You—!” Diluc gapes at him, and then pushes at his shoulder. “I have half a mind to call off this wedding right now.”

“Hm, I thought I fucked that out, what, five years ago, perhaps longer?”

Diluc pinches Kaeya’s ear in retaliation, not wanting to mess with him too badly because of the suit, and Kaeya grabs his hand to get him off, laughing

softly, leaning in to press their lips together. Diluc sighs into the kiss, all but melting into it as Kaeya's hands slide up to trace his back, dig into the tension in his shoulders. He feels a little guilty for not allowing more moments like these, now, but—

“You're already perfect for me,” Kaeya whispers, kissing his cheek. Diluc fights off a blush, with failure. “Let's enjoy ourselves tomorrow, yeah?”

“Sure,” Diluc agrees, feeling faint, and then steps away from Kaeya, gesturing at him. “You look good.”

“I always do,” he smiles, but Diluc recognizes the look in his eyes, having seen the same one in the mirror. He's truly happy with it. “Help me take it off?”

Diluc licks his lips, hesitating. “No, you can't trick me into sex.”

“You say that, as if you aren't the one with time reserved for orgasms in your schedule,” Kaeya unbuttons his vest, ignoring Diluc's flustered sputtering. “I haven't fucked you in what, three months, almost? You've barely let me finger you a couple times.”

“It's supposed to create anticipation,” Diluc reaches his hands out as Kaeya hands him his suit, piece by piece, until he's free to turn around and put him out of sight to hang it back, inside the travel bag, making sure there's no wrinkles before closing the zipper. “We already know each other inside out, so—”

Arms wrap around his waist, thumbs hanging onto the tie of his robe as Kaeya's naked chest presses against his back. “So it'll be better tomorrow night, right? Give us an edge?”

“Yes,” Diluc whispers, shivering as Kaeya starts undoing the knot. “Wait, I'm wearing—”

“You have another set, don't you, love?” Kaeya chuckles, and lips press against his neck, making their way up to his ear with soft caresses. Diluc

almost moans when Kaeya speaks right into it. “Let’s have a little fun. I won’t even touch your ass, your pretty cock is fun to toy with, too.”

A hand slips under the bathrobe, caringly running over the lace covering his belly, and Diluc’s resolve starts to crumble, his heart fluttering. Luckily, before Kaeya can do more than bite the junction of his neck and shoulder, there’s a knock at the door, startling Diluc out of a Kaeya-induced haze.

He practically jumps away from his touch, turning to glare at him, as Adeline speaks.

“Master Diluc, it’s been twenty minutes,” she calls, as Diluc slaps Kaeya’s hands reaching his way, ignoring his pout. He only allows a kiss to press against his lips, and even then, just for a few seconds. “Master Kaeya’s room is ready.”

“I’ll be right there, Adeline!” Kaeya answers, grinning at Diluc. Then, he lowers his voice. “Ah, shame, imagine how you’d look walking down the aisle with a few love bites—”

“No, out,” Diluc takes another step back, crossing his arms protectively over his chest, gesturing with his head at the door. “You can do whatever you want to me tomorrow.”

“Hm, whatever I want?”

Diluc shivers again, letting his eyes fall from Kaeya’s dark gaze. “As long as it’s within reason.”

“I have reasons,” and Kaeya reaches out again, fast as a cat, to grope his butt. Diluc makes a sound somewhere between a yelp and a curse, prompting Adeline to threaten them with opening the door to preserve Diluc’s... fairness. Whatever’s left of it, at least. Kaeya laughs, but steps back himself when Diluc’s glare intensifies. “Fine, let get my pants on.”

“Ugh,” Diluc scoffs, watching as Kaeya slips into his pants and doesn’t bother to button his shirt, but leaves the rest of his clothes right where they

fell. He sees him run his fingers through his hair, still long, almost as long as his own, and something in Diluc softens. “Ugh, I love you.”

Kaeya turns towards him with a smile, lays a kiss on his forehead. “Me too. See you tomorrow?”

There go his nerves again. “Yeah.”

Diluc doesn’t sleep a wink, but he spends all night dreaming.

3. that this wouldn't be

Notes for the Chapter:

...yeah i have no excuses this is gonna be 4 chapters long. whoops. might take longer to get the last one out, since i seem to be entering writer's block, at least for smut lol. but don't worry. i'll give u the diluc lewds, like u lovely people deserve. this chapter is pure fluff. enjoy!

The dress is a real beauty; lace over semi-transparent fabric covers almost every inch of it, flowing like a waterfall from every angle of the skirt. Long sleeves hug Diluc's arms down to his wrists, a straight neck up to his collarbone nicely complements the strength of Diluc's shoulders, the seam from where the skirt starts bringing out the narrowness of his waist. A delicate, elegant yet simple piece, the white so pure that Diluc's hair and his eyes stand-out like something out of a dream. His Vision is nestled against his hip by a strip of fabric wrapped around him to match, standing out among the white, but it's hardly worth mentioning over Diluc's own beauty.

There's rouge on his lips, a light pink-red, and Kaeya's pretty sure Adeline spent quite a few minutes pinching Diluc's cheeks red earlier today, because Kaeya knows very well that he's too pale for most blushes, and he's already so colorful in his features, all that ruby in both his body and his demeanor, that the leftover pink is all he needs.

As Diluc walks towards him, alone – and a dull pain echoes in his chest, knowing Crepus should be with him – Kaeya has a feeling, running through his limbs and making his heart beat faster, that he underestimated his reaction to this: Diluc's graceful form, chin held high, step secure, early afternoon sun making the white of his outfit stand out, Calla Lilies in his grasp because he couldn't resist going for them, in the end.

He's entranced beyond reason, barely holds himself back from reaching out with his hands, once Diluc stops in front of him. He waits for him to offer him his hold, Adeline, red-faced with tears, stepping it briefly to take the bouquet from Diluc and let them hold each other.

His throat is dry, and he doesn't know what kind of face he's making, but the Kamera-man that was hired is really dedicated to capturing it.

"Eyes up here, Kaeya."

"Hm?" He asks, too busy staring at the way the ribbon woven through Diluc's up-do, one so complicated-looking that the hair stylist must be proud, is leashed to the high collar around his neck, as if to keep it pressed against his skin. The collar is a family heirloom, if memory serves right, but the ribbon tied with such care around it is...

He hears a few chuckles, and then Diluc is grabbing him by the tie, which he actually decided to wear for the pictures, adjusting it slightly and leaning in for a second to press a kiss against his cheek, through the veil. Finally, Kaeya looks at Diluc's eyes, noticing how red his face is, and his brain processes Venti standing to the side, the rows of people sitting in waiting, the band finishing the song that indicated the ceremony had begun.

He blinks. "Ah, you'll have to forgive me, love, you're just... stunning."

If it were possible, Diluc would probably blush even darker, but as it is, he just huffs out an amused breath, shaking his head and playfully pulling his tie again. "You're practically drooling."

"Lisa warned me about that," Kaeya says, and, forgoing self-control, runs his hand over the open back of the dress, fingers tracing Diluc's spine. They're going off script from the rehearsal, standing too close, touching too much, but neither of them seem to care. "I don't think I'll manage to keep myself from doing it."

Diluc visibly holds back a shiver, looking at him from underneath his eyelashes. "If you ruin my dress, I'll ruin your eye-patch collection."

Kaeya groans. "Noted."

Venti clears his throat, amusement dripping from his voice. "You know, this isn't my first Ragnvindr wedding, but I'm glad I'm sober for this one, hehe!"

“Drunk bard,” Diluc mumbles, and Kaeya swallows a laugh, raising an eyebrow as they make eye contact again. Diluc looks at the ground, not unlike when they were younger, and he was easily reduced to shy nods. Kaeya’s heart might not be able to handle this. “You may begin, Lord Barbatos.”

The ceremony was short. Mondstadt’s weddings usually are, since it’s the party that holds the most importance, but longer wedding oaths and vows had come in fashion among the high society over the last few decades, or so Jean claimed while pretending she wasn’t jittery with the romance floating in the air.

They had agreed that they had no need for vows beyond tradition. They had already made promises to each other, again and again, both in private and under other oaths, ever since they were children. Neither of them are ones for long tirades of romantic poetry, either, much less so in public; they would’ve been just as happy with soliciting the wedding certificates and other paperwork from Jean and the church and then coming home to a nice dinner, if Diluc hasn’t felt like they were owed a nicer, private celebration.

Even then, it is quite beautiful, with Dawn Winery covered in garlands of flowers and delicate fairy lights. There’s something that feels permanent about this moment, as they go through the motions, exchanging promises, rings, tying their hands together, feeding each other a sip of wine – because Mondstadt’s traditions can’t go without it – until Venti declares them life partners, husbands, spouses, soulmates, with the finality only having a god officiate your wedding can bring.

Kaeya notices his hands shaking when he lifts Diluc’s veil, sees him trying to blink back tears, and perhaps he should’ve chased after Diluc so many years ago, because he can’t believe he was ever able to live without this.

He would like to say that their kiss was the sweeter than Sweet Flowers, but in reality, the moment their lips touch and applause starts, Diluc wraps his arms around his neck, pulls him in, eagerly welcoming Kaeya’s bruising grip on his hips and being the first to open his mouth—and who is he to say no to his wife, truly? It isn’t until the cat-calling starts that they break apart, breathing hard, but their eyes are only for each other.

“I love you,” Diluc whispers, holding onto him like a lifeline, his eyes misty. “I’m—so happy. Gods, I can’t believe you’re here—”

Diluc chokes up, but Kaeya understands the sentiment, brings him in and hugs him so hard it might hurt, pressing a kiss over his forehead.

“There, love,” Kaeya sighs. “I’m home.”

The party moves inside, shortly afterwards, once they’re able to unstick from each other. Early dinner is served, since Mondstadtian weddings usually mean a lot of drinking and a lot of finger foods to balance it out, along with the cake – which is actually big enough to feed double their guests and features four different flavors – and an assortment of meats.

Diluc’s business partners don’t appear quite as puzzled as Kaeya expected them to be, but the invitations – well, most of them – had been sent early enough, that they probably got over the shock of Master Crepus’ son and the child he fostered getting married just in time to get their impressions in order.

The rest of the guests, though, are quite a mixed bag.

“This is so weird!” Amber complains, seemingly oblivious to the fact that they can hear her, just as Kaeya is about to steal another kiss from Diluc. Kaeya doesn’t spare her a glance, having already predicted she’d be the one suffering from most of the confusion, but Diluc seems too terribly amused by her to kiss him back. “I’m so happy for them, but it’s so sudden! I was convinced the invitation was a prank from Sir Kaeya for *two months*!”

Dainsleif stands beside her, being the unfortunate victim of her grief. Considering the three wine glasses he’s holding, he only approached the refreshments table for a light drink without intending to talk to anyone. “Really.”

“Yes! He loves to pull that kind of stunts,” Amber nods, and Dainsleif frowns like he’s realizing that he’s not escaping her, once Amber’s hand

falls on his forearm. “Master Diluc was always so reserved, who could have seen this coming?”

“Someone with eyes?” Dainsleif mumbles, but alas, he’s ignored, as Amber recounts that one time Kaeya moved the flower pots around the Ordo a bit to the left just to mess with her.

“Should I help him?” Kaeya asks, having trouble holding back a laugh, and Diluc elbows him, turning his head back to look up at him with accusing eyes, but the tightness of his lips pressed together implies that he might laugh about it later. “It’s not *my* fault no one told her.”

“I’m surprised she came, considering she had no idea,” Diluc rolls his eyes, but then squints. “I’m surprised *Dainsleif* came. It was hard enough getting in contact with Aether and Lumine, I’m surprised they were able to hand out the invitation to him.”

“I could’ve done without the Khaenri’ahn delegation,” Kaeya shrugs, and Diluc winces. “You weren’t expecting them to come, either?”

“I have a feeling they don’t like me,” Diluc pouts. “They start whispering in Khaenri’ahn when I’m around...”

Kaeya decides to keep to himself, at least for now, the fact that most of the time they’re discussing either how pretty he is, how strong he is, or how many children he might be able to provide to restore the Eclipse Dynasty. It disturbs even him at times, if only because Khaenri’ah’s relationship with Mondstadt is still more neutral than positive, and Diluc is far more than something to gawk at. Their marriage is a great political alliance for Mondstadt and Khaenri’ah, but they aren’t pawns, and Kaeya fully intends to get this across in the future.

“You need to take up your lessons again,” Kaeya presses a kiss against Diluc’s ear, chuckles when he makes a disagreeable sound. “Now, now, sweetheart, who was the star student when we were kids?”

“*You* were,” Diluc rolls his eyes, letting Kaeya wrap his arms around him from behind, hands holding onto a plate with a piece of cake. He’s being

quite a leach today, but Diluc is his *wife* now, and every touch is returned within the second. “You just slacked off enough that it balanced out.”

“Shouldn’t that take the title away from me?” Kaeya kisses the back of his neck next, and stares again at the way his hair ribbon leashes his collar. It’s well-hidden, of course, and the collar itself is an elegant piece of jewelry, thin, made out of gold of the most polished kind with a pretty jewel on the front, matching his own earring; Diluc’s hair hides the cord so cleverly, and he’s in love with it. With him. Fuck, they’re *married*. “You’re so beautiful...”

“You aren’t half-bad yourself,” Diluc smiles, and then grabs Kaeya’s plate off his hand, scoops cake in the spoon, holding it up for him. “You’re gonna eat this? I got your favorite for a reason—”

Kaeya’s wrapping his lips around the spoon before Diluc continues to call him out on his inability to do anything but stare at him, humming in appreciation as he swallows. “That’s good.”

“There’s this chef from Liyue, she’s a known fan of outlandish ingredients, but their menu was the best,” Diluc shoves another piece of cake in his mouth without prompting, smearing cream all over his lips, only to lean in and kiss it off. He’s barely aware that the Kamera-man Diluc hired is *really* going at it right now, instead letting Diluc lick the sweetness off his lips before nipping at him, swallowing the soft, happy chuckle that escapes Diluc with his tongue.

“Hey, lovebirds!” Venti calls, reminding them once again that there are people around, and Kaeya wants to ignore him, but Diluc dutifully puts some distance between them, turning towards him. Kaeya follows his gaze, only to see Venti pulling out a chair to the center of space cleared out to act as the dance floor, where Albedo was indulging Klee’s desire to learn how to waltz. “It’s time to remove the garter!”

Kaeya straightens up, but Diluc groans. “I was hoping everyone would forget about that.”

“Your dress is distracting enough that I did,” Kaeya concedes, yet drags him over to where Venti stands, their guests gathering around them to watch. Lisa has her own kamera in hand, and thankfully Diluc doesn't notice, or he would probably combust where he stands. “I’ll remind you, you agreed to this, but you can back down. Venti will understand, right?”

“It’s tradition though, every Ragnvindr has—”

Kaeya shoots him a look, but Diluc clears his throat. “I want to do this.”

Well, he won’t complain about that; what his wife wants, he gets. Diluc gets on top of the chair with both his and Venti’s *delighted* help, seemingly resigned, but the smile on his lips is permanent, has been for a while now. A sight for Mondstadt’s sore eyes, for sure, to see that grin return.

“Get on with it, then,” Diluc crosses his arms, raising his chin like the master of the house he is, but the second Kaeya lifts the skirt of the dress to his ankle, someone – read, Lisa – wolf-whistles, and his face turns red. He throws him a pleading glance. “*Please*, get on with it.”

Kaeya takes a second to look up at him and admire the view; from the softness of his cheeks that has never truly gone away, to the high blush on his ears, the elegance of his neck, for once only covered by that thin gold collar. He wonders if it’s too soon to want to renew his vows, because he’ll never get tired of this sight.

With that moment of appreciation over, then, Kaeya waves at their eager guests, ever the charmer – Jean is crying again, squeezed between Barbara and Lisa, and Dainsleif looks as close to amused as Kaeya’s ever seen him, standing beside Sister Rosaria – before turning back towards Diluc and slowly lifting the skirt up to his thigh. His own breath still catches at the display of skin, and Diluc’s hidden his face in his hands, but peeks over his fists to look down at him.

They make eye contact after he finally reaches the height of the garter, being careful not to show more than what he has to – this is already more skin than Diluc’s ever showed in public since he was a very young child,

and it's all *his*, thank you very much – and then Kaeya shamelessly leans in with his mouth, to Diluc's ever-dawning horror, grabbing it with his teeth.

"I hate you," he whispers, as Kaeya starts dragging down the garter, slowly sinking to his knees, fingertips caressing Diluc's leg as he lowers the skirt back down, inch by inch. Kaeya pauses to press a kiss over his knee, to which the guests whistle and cheer over the music. Diluc goes back to hiding his face in his hands. "*Gods*, I hate you."

Ideally, this moment would have been private, but the Ragnvindr are a family with both tradition and courage steeped deep within their blood and their minds since birth, knowing better than anyone what it means to be a native to the City of Freedom. Diluc's all that's left of the family, now, and Kaeya knew, when he saw that Diluc's first source for wedding ideas was the family portraits album, that he was too aware of this, knew he would want to follow everything to the letter.

Removing a wedding garter before the guests was hardly a big deal, since Kaeya could've chosen to hide under the skirt instead; it was throwing it at them afterwards that stood out.

So, he continues his trek down with the garter between his teeth, until he's low enough that he can let go of the skirt, hold Diluc's ankle with a hand, and use the other to get it off his feet. He stands up, then, side-eyes the guests that look prepared for him to throw it at any direction at any point—and promptly hides the garter in his suit jacket.

Some traditions are best changed.

Venti chirps like a bird in disapproval. "Hey!"

"Sorry!" Kaeya smirks, patting his chest where the garter is, and then turns towards Diluc, who seems one part relieved, one part disapproving. He extends a hand to help him down the chair, immediately wrapping a possessive arm around him, looking at the disappointed guests. "Control yourself, people, my wife is owed some respect!"

Diluc buries his face against his shoulder. "Our marriage is doomed now."

Kaeya barks out a laugh. “You’ve always been superstitious when it comes to tradition like this.”

“Fine. But if I don’t get pregnant first-try when we try it, I’m blaming *you*,” Diluc grumbles, and Kaeya waits for his expression to break out in humor, until he realizes he’s serious and has to bite his lip to keep from bursting out a laugh. Diluc swats his arm with his hand. “Hey! Take responsibility.”

“I don’t recall this tradition being related to fertility at all,” Kaeya snorts, and Diluc tries to distract him from the obvious conclusion by tilting his head up for a kiss, which—he gives in, admittedly, how could he say no? But he doesn’t lose his train of thought. “Hm, are you trying to tell me something about your wish to stick to tradition? I do recall that the first Ragnvindr heir in a new generation is usually born almost nine months to the day of the wedding, give or take... should I get the potions right now?”

“No,” Diluc swallows, wrapping his arms around Kaeya’s neck. A slow song starts, then, as Venti goes back to play with the band, an old ballad that’s believed to have been lost up until recently, which is to say, up until Venti realized people didn’t remember it anymore. Seeing as they’re already on the dance floor, Kaeya only deems it appropriate to sway them in time with the music. Diluc took a few lessons to improve his two left-feet, but he still seems unsure of his step. “Ugh, dancing...”

“It is true that you were always better at composing,” Kaeya chuckles, and Diluc follows his lead into a twirl, holding onto him so tight that one might think he’s afraid of tripping. He has no problem following a beat, but he never relaxes enough to let the music fully guide him when it comes to dancing. It’s probably a good thing that he decided to wear flat shoes, instead of the heels Lisa had proposed. “You were wonderful for our first dance.”

“That’s because we practiced,” Diluc sighs, staring up at Kaeya with wide eyes, reminding him of when they were younger. Ah, such green boys they were, if only barely when it came to himself. “Will you play the piano for me tomorrow?”

“Will you sing for me in return?” Kaeya murmurs, bringing Diluc closer and pressing a kiss against his temple.

“If you want,” Diluc concedes, his expression soft. There’s a shadow of nostalgia to it, sadness, and Kaeya guesses his words before they come. “Do you... do you think father would be happy? Proud?”

Ignoring the fact that they’ve started swaying to their own tune, trapped in their own little bubble, Kaeya nods, caressing Diluc’s cheek with a hand. “What is there not to be happy or proud about? His son is marrying for love, looks so beautiful it would turn any lady green, and leads the winery and Mondstadt towards an even brighter dawn, with every day that passes.”

Diluc’s lips tremble, just so, and he blinks some moisture out of his eyes. “He’d be proud of you, as well.”

Kaeya takes a deep breath, then, huffing out a low laugh. “That’s a pretty fantasy I would be willing to live.”

“It’s not fantasy,” Diluc pulls at Kaeya’s tie as if to chastise him. “He loved you just as he loved me. All that stuff, about you being a spy... Father would have forgiven you much sooner than I did.”

Kaeya would like to deny it, if only because he doesn’t think he deserves that after letting Diluc spend four years on his own, but... Master Crepus was a man kinder than most. Kaeya’s disillusion with him, after he realized he craved glory enough to obtain a Delusion, has slowly made him respect him more, in the years after, made him realize that he wasn’t that different from him, or from Diluc, despite his origins. How could the man that took him in and brought him into his family be the same that craved the honor of having power, even if to protect, so badly?

It’s the same conundrum Kaeya’s lived and breathed for years; how could he be the Cavalry Captain and the Quartermaster of the Ordo Favonius, if a part of him belongs on a throne of stars? How could the people of Khaenri’ah have enough spirit in them to send him away from its horrors on a mission, yet lack the clear-headedness to see that a war with Mondstadt

would bring no good? How could Diluc have been so determined to protect him, if he didn't trust him?

Nothing is ever black and white, he knows this better than most. Kaeya can't imagine Crepus Ragnvindr looking at a younger version of himself, confessing his reality with a choked voice, and telling him he couldn't be his son anymore.

"I believe you," Kaeya pauses their movement, pressing his forehead against Diluc's. It's amazing, how they've managed to stay together through it all. "Gods, how I love you."

"I love you, too," Diluc smiles, pecking his lips, and looks up at him with reluctant, shining eyes. "The party isn't over yet, and we've been neglecting our guests all night."

"Fuck them," Kaeya grins, as Diluc shakes his head and starts dragging him off to properly stop and talk to people, instead of standing in corners with each other. It seems they're too used to hiding. "Fine, then, can we start at the wine table? I've barely had a glass or two..."

"You had five."

"Aw, is my wife counting?"

Diluc stops at this, leans into his space to whisper. "I won't let you get so drunk that I'll have to do all the work tonight."

Kaeya licks his lips, feeling a filthy smirk cut through his lips. "Have I ever let you unsatisfied?"

An amused shrug, just on the side of flustered. "Keep up the good work, my prince."

"With pleasure."

“Royal weddings in Khaenri’ah weren’t like this,” Dainsleif comments, and Diluc’s heart spikes with nervousness, thinking that he maybe should’ve asked someone about Khaenri’ahn traditions. But Dain continues after taking a sip of his drink, his voice as calm as ever, noticeably filled with a newfound, real peace. “Then again, I doubt that many remember old traditions, especially regarding proper treatment towards the crown. Prince Kaeya should’ve never been raised in such manner, once chosen heir... but that’s irrelevant, and this celebration is quite appropriate. Perhaps nicer than some of the royal weddings I remember.”

Diluc ignores his self-satisfaction, going for a smile. “I’ll take that compliment, then.”

“As you should,” Dainsleif nods, and gestures towards where Kaeya’s roped Jean into a dance, her face red, Lisa standing beside them as she laughs. “I hold no fondness for Mondstadt the way you do, but Khaenri’ah has been on its own for too long. It was time to bring it out of the shadows... to do away with that old curse.”

“Teyvat has a lot of repenting to do,” Diluc sighs. “We’ve been living blind at your expense.”

“Celestia can’t get to you anymore, and Khaenri’ah is free from the corruption of the Abyss, which is all I wanted,” Dainsleif holds Diluc’s gaze, then closes his eyes. It’s amazing, he thinks, how evident the relief he feels is. Five-hundred years of seeing his home being swallowed by the deeper parts of the Abyss, left to dust, as what remained of its leadership was cursed and poisoned... Diluc doesn’t envy him. “We have much to be thankful for, tonight, so let’s not dwell on matters related to politics.”

“If you ever see Aether, Lumine and Paimon around... they were missed tonight.” Diluc says, watches as Dainsleif lowers his gaze, almost, *almost* embarrassed. Diluc hopes that the four of them can reunite soon, after Kaeya feels like Khaenri’ah is ready to move on from its last heir and sword of old. “I can’t thank you enough for what you’ve done.”

Dainsleif nods, and then extends his hand.

Puzzled, Diluc takes it, thinking it's a handshake, but Dainsleif brings it up to his lips and kisses it, making him choke on air. He draws back, perfectly composed, either oblivious or uncaring of Diluc's reaction. "It's been my pleasure, your grace."

Eyebrows shooting up to his forehead, Diluc is about to tell Dainsleif exactly what he thinks about that, but an arm wraps around his waist, a chin landing on his shoulder.

"My sword, are you flirting with my wife?" Kaeya asks, half playful, half serious. Dainsleif suddenly looks awkward, though he almost seems vaguely intimidated, as well. Diluc's well-aware that he isn't the only one that gets jealous, of course, but every time he's reminded of it a thrill runs down his spine.

"I thought it'd be an appropriate way of showing my respects to the queen, Your Highness."

"The—" Kaeya starts, only to be interrupted by his own snort, and Diluc brings a hand up to cover his face, not wanting anything to do with this at all. Kaeya squeezes him, pressing their cheeks together, no doubt having the time of his life at his expense. And even then, Diluc wouldn't change him for anything. "Forgive me, then, Dain, you may proceed to address Master Ragnvindr as such—"

Diluc whines, but he'll deny it later. "*Kaeya.*"

"—though I guess that's Master Ragnvindr-Alberich now, isn't it?"

Dainsleif mumbles a '*very well*' and wisely leaves them alone, just as Diluc turns in Kaeya's arms, but his protests about how much he's embarrassing him die on his tongue when he notices that he's taken off his tie, his high ponytail is gone, the vest unbuttoned. His mouth is instantly dry.

"Cat got your tongue, honey?" Kaeya teases, holding Diluc's chin with a hand to lift it and let their eyes meet, and that look is so adoring, so honest, he's so beautiful— "Hm, I know that look, but there's still a bit before we can sneak out, right?"

Diluc blinks, swallowing. “We *could*. Right now.”

Kaeya chuckles. “Have you been drinking?”

Diluc hasn’t had a drop of alcohol, but he almost wishes he had. “I—nothing, no, forget it, you’re right... let’s just...”

He gestures vaguely towards the celebration around them, but Kaeya leans down for a kiss, and Diluc doesn’t manage to hold back a full-body shiver, clinging to the lapels of Kaeya’s jacket, momentarily forgetting that the shouldn’t wrinkle the fabric. It’s a heavy kiss, tastes of wine and the cherries that were on the cake, and he really doesn’t want to let go of it, letting Kaeya’s tongue into his mouth—yet, he’s thankful for an interruption.

“Master Diluc!” Venti taps Kaeya’s shoulder, shameless about interrupting what was undeniably a make-out session, and gestures towards his companion—ah. Right, this. “This is Zhongli, the one I told you about!”

“Ah, of course,” Diluc gazes at the man, extending his hand in a handshake. “I understand you’re a consultant for the Wangsheng Funeral Parlor?”

“Among other things, indeed. I must thank you for... *allowing* Venti to extend an invitation to me. It’s been quite a while since I’ve visited Mondstadt for the sake of pleasure,” Zhongli nods at Kaeya, humming. “I wish you luck and happiness in your endeavors, as you prepare yourself for this new stage of life. May the winds of Mondstadt bring you prosperity and wisdom, and may your love grow with it. I remember meeting a few of the Ragnvindr in my time, and they were all wonderful individuals, with a clear understanding of contracts despite their roots in freedom—”

“He’s happy for you!” Venti interrupts, and Kaeya fails at stifling a snort, as Venti grabs onto Zhongli’s arm and shakes him. Zhongli, for his part, looks adequately used to both the interruption and the overexcited treatment. “You really haven’t changed, have you, grandpa?”

“Excuse me?” Zhongli frowns. “May I remind you of your own age—”

“Haha, I’m just messing with you, friend!”

“Oh, my,” Kaeya mocks whispers, pressing his lips against Diluc’s ear. “Please tell me I’m not going to come across another Archon to keep happy, love, I think Dain might stab one of them if he comes across them, and I wouldn’t dare stop him.”

Diluc digs his elbow into Kaeya’s ribs, holding back a smile, and steps in to interrupt Venti and Zhongli’s bickering. He might have played too loose with the guest list, after all. “A pleasure to meet you, Zhongli. Perhaps, if I find myself in a visit to Liyue, we could entertain the idea of meeting for lunch.”

“That would be wonderful, Master Diluc,” Zhongli says, at the same time Venti whispers something about his lack of Mora, which he chooses to ignore. His dress cost more than organizing the wedding itself. He won’t mind paying for a lunch. “I hope you have a great night.”

As Venti drags Zhongli away to the dessert table, where Klee is trying to stuff herself without Jean noticing, Kaeya hums, and Diluc turns his head towards him.

“I wonder,” Kaeya says, a smile slowly forming over his lips. “Is this what our lives will look like from now on?”

Diluc snorts, and takes his hand in his, intertwining their fingers. “I suppose we’ll find out.”

Author's Note:

im @stardustdreams7 over at twitter. idk how to link things, so what?

anyways, hope you enjoyed that! i liked writing it. hopefully it isn't Too Much lol

please look forward to the next part!